

hard to say no. by homosexualbyers

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Summary:

‘he felt like he was on some kinda sugar rush without even eating any sugar. A feeling he’d only been able to attach to celebrity heartthrobs and playground crushes. I mean he was 18 for crying out loud, this was silly. He was far above age old school crushes, especially for a lost friend he hadn’t seen in years.’

basically here’s some boarding school au byler and bichie with some reddie and me running my nonbinary mind free with will byers.

hard to say no.

Bill hated days like these. Jumping knee deep into unpredictability, he hated it, he hated it, he hated it. He could never really see how people would react to him. Today the stakes were raised higher. His first day at ST Columbus Boarding School he would meet his new peers who he was going to get extremely too close for comfort with. In his head what they thought of who he was meant the most.

That's why he was still frozen outside his dorm room where the Dean had left him to meet his roommates alone. The door was sandwiched open just a crack by a shoe and he could faintly hear David Bowie's *Moonage Daydream* playing within the room. He gulps. The Dean had said they were called Richard and Will. He knows it's silly but he tries to judge them a little just knowing that. He pictured Richard as a really privileged guy, probably had a couple hundred bucks to flaunt around, there's no way he got into Columbus on a grant like Bill did and he thought he knew all the scientific facts around Bill's 'condition'. In his head Will was a tall stocky sports guy who would only see Bill's tits and wouldn't be able to wrap his head around the whole boy thing. Plain and simple, Will would be ignorant. Memories from the past year fluttered through his head and shuddered down his spine.

He really didn't want to do this but now five guys were hauling a couch down the hall and him and his luggage were taking up space he felt like he had to. He swung open the door and dragged his suitcase forward with him.

The room inside was mostly clear apart from an array of boxes around bunk bed furthest to the door, a suitcase open at the foot of it with dresses spilling out. That was the first thing Bill thought was weird. The next was in front of the bay window where there was a tiny coffee table, a worn brown couch and a girl sat in an armchair faced away from him with her feet up on the windowsill, her feet just hanging out of it and smoking blowing from her. She looked back at

Bill as he crossed the threshold, she wore bright red lipstick and big circular sunglasses.

Shit, Bill thought. The Dean didn't take him to the wrong dorm did he? Oh, please don't say he was in with the girls. "Suh-sorry, wrong room. I'm t-t-t-trying to fuh-find the boys dorm." He hurriedly said, going to close the door and leave.

"No, you're here." She said, raising a hand to stop him. "I'm a guy. Well, not really. But I have all the same parts you do." They take off their sunglasses and reveal a more obviously boyish face and smiles at him. They point to the couch opposite them.

Bill continues walking into the room uneasily and stands on the other side of the coffee table. He notices a record player on a table beside them that the music from before plays from. There's a box full of vinyl records on the table with a few scattered across it.

"I'm Will." They say. "But my friends all call me Robin and that's what you're gonna hear them calling me when they're here. I'm... Uh-" Robin blew more smoke out of the window. "I'm nonbinary, so like... try be gender neutral with me. What's your name?"

Bill stared at the back of Robin's head, at their knotty dark black hair that ran just past their shoulders. This was far from a stocky sports guy. Robin was tiny in an overgrown hoodie and their slim yet sort of muscular legs glide out from under a soft black skirt. They had a lot of leg hair, that was less of a surprise.

Bill leaves his luggage and sits opposite them "I'm B-B-Bill." He said, noticing he let his masc voice drop in all the surprise.

He waits for Robin to ask something about it but they just welcome him to the school in a mocking monotone voice and giggle to

themselves. They put their cigarette in their pocket which has Bill's eyes widening.

Robin laughs. "It's not real." They tell him, taking it back out and showing him the thin white tube. "It's just an e-cig."

"So you're trying to quit?"

"Nah, I've never smoked real cigarettes. Well, apart from when I'm drunk. This way I get to look cool and take artsy pictures without as much nicotine guilt. And the bad breath. My boyfriend heckles me relentlessly for it." They put it back away and pull half their hair up into a ponytail. "So is this your first time boarding?" They ask.

"Yeah."

Robin nods and smiles warmly at him. "First years tough for the first few weeks but it's one of the most exciting ones after that." They look out the window, across at all the arriving students around the circle of dorm blocks. "Do you want a coke? My mom packed fucking loads."

He nods and Robin jumps up and goes to root around their bags near their bed.

This could work, Bill thought. Robin would at least understand him being trans, not just because of their own gender but they seemed very lackadaisical about the whole thing. Bill didn't exactly feel like he passed yet, in his experience most people usually knew before he even opened his mouth. And Robin probably knew a fair few trans people and they could probably tell but they hadn't chosen to say a thing yet. They could be a safety net for Bill here.

Robin comes back to their chair and hands Bill a can of coke and pops open their own. He decides to just let it blurt out. "I'm a trans boy."

Robin nods and takes a sip of their drink. "It's cool. So is Mike." They brush a hair behind their ear. "When I first got here that was when I first came out like ever and I just felt everyone looking at me. Even when they weren't. You get this feeling that people are always thinking about you don't you?"

Bill nods. "Yeah, it's just like that."

Robin grinned and leaned forward in their chair. "How about we make a pact right off the bat? If there's anything we wanna ask about gender or anything we don't just think it we just ask. If the other person isn't comfortable answering then they just don't fucking answer. Simple as that."

Bill wasn't sure but he wasn't about to shut down his new friend. Partly, he just really wanted to know more about Robin too. "...Okay." He finds himself saying slowly.

Robin sat back in their chair, happy with themself.

A ball of paper came zooming in the open window knocking Bill's hand and spilling his coke. "Wuh-what the hell?" Bill yells.

Robin watches the ball bounce off, unphased by it. They get up and grab a towel out of one of their bags and throw it back to Bill and then crouch around for the ball. Finding it and unravelling it they tut. "First day back and Mike has already lost his fob. I'll be right back. Richard might arrive whilst I'm gone and he's new too so like try not to die from the silent awkwardness."

Robin hurried down the hall and down the stairs, bare feet padding on the linoleum floor. They smile at everyone who they pass and most smiled back or waved. Robin was ecstatic to be back and in the clothes they wanted. Back home they had to keep it more chill but there was no such thing at school. They got to the bottom floor and spotted Mike through the glass of the front doors and practically sprinted across the lobby to hug him from behind and plant a kiss on his cheek.

“Hey, sucker.” They chuckle, ruffling his hair. He turns to face them and Robin gasps. “Oh- oh I’m so sorry.” They stammer. That wasn’t Mike. Well, he was very close to Mike but there was something about his face and he had these thick glasses that took up most of his face and magnified his eyes so they were wide and bug like.

He chuckled and grinned. “Is there more where that came from?” He asks snarkily.

He even smiled like Mike. This was too many kinds of weird.

“Hey, Robin.” The Real Mike said from behind him. “Uncanny, isn’t it?”

They walked past The Other Mike and hit their Mike on the arm. “Fucksake, Mike. You couldn’t have warned me?”

Mike laughs and clutches the white plastic bag he’s holding tightly. “Watch the booze, watch the booze. No chance. Your face was great.” He clutches Robin’s hand.

The Other Mike appears beside him and Robin looks dumbfounded between them, they really could be blood relatives.

“I found him at orientation. It was like looking in a fucking mirror.” Mike tells them.

The Other Mike smirks and eyes them up and down which makes them shudder.

“My Mike is hotter.” They say through gritted teeth.

*

Bill tied his hardest to busy himself with packing away his clothes into drawers beside his single bed. He couldn't get Robin out of his mind. He just hoped they would get back before Richard arrived, there was still unpredictability there and Bill felt like with Robin that'd be easier to confront.

And just as he was starting to dread it the lock in the door clicked and Robin walked into backwards, their hand attached to a taller boy who- no, Bill thought, it couldn't be.

“Bill, this is Mike and...” They laughed. “This is...”

Then after Mike a boy who was parallel. But the huge glasses and the stupid, stupid shirts this boy wore Bill would recognise them anywhere.

“Ruh-Rich?” Bill gasped. His best friend. The person who had been missing the most from his life over the past three years.

Richie Tozier was speechless for a moment. Bill fucking Denbrough. Speechless, only for a moment. “DENBROUGH!” He shouts, running up to his old friend and take him in his arms into a tight suffocating hug. “What the hell man?? You're bunking here too?”

“Y-y-yeah. My puh-parents transferred this year.”

Richie chuckled and squeezed Bill's arms which he was still holding from the hug. “Still as much a stuttering mess as I remembered, I love it!”

Robin notices how gentle Richie's face goes then and his huge eyes gloss over like they were about to melt right off of him.

Richie then slings one of his arms around Robin's neck and pulls them into a circle with him and Bill. Robin smiles at them both awkwardly, Richie was definitely still a shock to them.

“This is fucking crazy.” Richie says. “I'm roomies with my long lost twin's boyfriend and my best mate. What are the chances, huh? Who up there has it out for me? Shit, uh, is boyfriend right, Robin?”

“Enbyfriend is fine, Richie.”

“Right. My long lost twin's enbyfriend. Fucking hell.”

Robin glares at Mike for help who shrugs in return. “So...” They drag out. “How do you two know each other?” They ask, discreetly shrugging out of Richie's grip.

“We've been f-f-friends since kin-kindergarten.” Bill answers.

“Really? Us too.”

Mike sets down the plastic bag on the coffee table. “Drinks, lads?” He asks, taking out a pack of beers and setting them on the table.

“Hell yeah!” Richie hoots.

Bill looks at each person, hesitant. It was a little early wasn’t?

Robin puts a hand on his shoulder. “Come on, we’re going to a party tonight and you gotta get buzzed for it.” They smile, licking their teeth and raising their eyebrows in a daring way.

Bill nods.

“Great. Beer for the boys and wine for the enby.” Mike says, holding up a bottle of wine.

Robin skips over and takes it from him with a whispered yes and goes and flicks the lock on the door. They root through one of their boxes and pull out a wine glass with a base that looks like it’s been painted yellow with nail polish.

Bill and Richie sit with Mike on the couch and open their beers.

“I can’t believe Dustin and Lucas are doing a bonfire.” Robin says, slightly amazed to Mike. They pour their wine and cheers with every one of the boys.

“It’s a log burner, Robi.” Mike says back, taking a swig of his beer.

“That’s basically a bonfire.” Robin insists. They pick up a blue makeup bag and set it on their drawers and start wiping off their lipstick.

“Log burner.” Mike mouths to the other two.

“Plus, it’s Dustin and Lucas. Knowing them they’re gonna over do it

and it'll end up a bonfire by the end of the night." Robin says. They start to fiddle with something at their hairline then pull all their hair clean off.

"Jesus!" Richie jumps.

Robin laughs and waves the wig in their hand at him. "Gotcha!" They chuckle, setting the wig down and take off the cap they were wearing underneath. They pull clips out of their real hair which is a light auburn colour and slicked far back right now.

They all sit and talk for an hour. They laugh, drink, recount stories of back home. Although obviously Robin and Mike know each other far better than Bill and Richie know them both, as well as not really knowing each other and needing a lot of catching up, they don't make Bill and Richie feel like they're an ounce out of place. They don't bring up people they don't know or fire little in jokes between each other they rather ask Bill and Richie questions and make sure they're always following them.

Robin leaves to shower and get changed at 7:25 and leaves Mike, Bill and Richie talking.

Mike sits up on the windowsill and addresses the other two. "It's like a fucking fortress." He says. "You cross just an inch over that borderline and Mr Keene is on you like a shit ton of bricks. We're so so luck our dorm is in front of the woods, it's so much easier to get out."

Richie chuckles, he nods. "Nice. I can totally do that." He says, he looks proudly between the two.

Mike bursts out laughing at that, "You can do that?"

Bill looks at him questionly and then rolls his eyes, pantimone like, at Mike.

“Yeah.” Richie answers, he lays back in his seat, spreading out his arms and smirking at Bill. “A lot has changed in the past few years, B-B-Bill.”

Bill scoffs at him. “Has it, Tozier?”

“That it has, Billy-Boy.” He leans forward into the space between them on the couch. “I’ve managed to break enough rules in 15 and get kicked out of them all.”

Bill has to stop himself from looking so surprised. Richie was a loud kid, he always kicked up a storm with just about anyone and he earned himself the nickname Trashmouth after all but he wasn’t a bad kid. He didn’t cause trouble. He just wanted to be heard.

“Seriously? What happened, Rich?” Bill asked.

Richie looks down at his beer can, flicking the tab lightly. “Since I left Derry and just didn’t have the Losers anymore-” He notices Mike sat there, makes a face like he’d forgotten he was even there for a moment. He drifts back to look at Bill. “and I don’t know what happened.”

Bill nods, watching his friend look off. He didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

Mike sparks up talking about Lucas and Dustin who both came from rich families and lived in the village down the road to soften how quiet the room had gotten.

There’s a rapid knock at the door and Bill hops up and rushes over and unlocks the lock and opens it. Robin rushes in wearing an nice

soft looking orange jumper under some faded blue dungarees. Their natural auburn hair falls in their face in a shaggy pixie cut.

“The Dean’s coming, hide the fucking alcohol!” They whisper.

Mike springs into action, grabbing the beers from each of the boys and the rest of the pack and running over to Robin’s bedside and flinging open the bottom cupboard and shoving them inside then turning and quickly taking Robin’s wine bottle and glass from them. Mike slams it shut and jumps on the lower bed of Robin’s bunk and somehow lands casually and Robin vaults over the bed and zips open their makeup bag and hurriedly takes out a lipstick.

“Bill, look natural!” Robin scoulds from across the room at Bill who was still stood, slightly stunned next to the door.

He sprints his bed and jumps on it, landing a little startled.

There’s a strong knock on the door and the Dean walks in and looks around at everyone, lingering on Bill for a little longer. He stops in front of Robin.

“Good Evening, Robin. How’s your Mom?” He says.

“Hey, Hop. Don’t worry, she’s still single.” They reply, sweetly, not looking at him at first then smiling at him.

Hopper chuckles lightly thrown off. “Not what I meant but okay.”

“Sure, it wasn’t.” They smirk.

Hop tries to stare them down but he averts his eyes. “Look, we’re

just-”

“Hop, I know.”

He shakes his head and turns to nod at Mike.

As soon as Hop turns his back Robin starts waving their hands drastically at Richie, to which Richie squints over at them, bewildered and Robin starts to point at the empty crushed beer can on the coffee table. Richie scatters to pick it up then looks around him, unsure quite what to do. In frantic spontaneity he throw it across the room at Robin who catches it and quick stuffs it in their dungarees.

Hop nods at Bill and Richie and smiles at them both. “Are you both settling okay?” He asks.

Richie hoots a long yeah with his hand then notices everyone staring at him and stops.

Hop walks over to Bill’s bed, who smiles with uncertainty. “Are you comfortable with your sleeping arrangement, Bill?” Hop asks, he knew Bill had been a tad on edge earlier.

He had. But none of that was there anymore and he was able to relax and tell Hopper “It’s all fine. I’m h-happy with this.” His eyes meet Richie’s then who was watching them, something inside him swells.

Hopper nods stiffly and turns back to the rest of the room. “Come on, Mike, back to your dorm.” He beckons towards the door. “Lights out everyone. I want you all in bed by 9, Goodnight guys.”

Each return the goodnight. Mike squeezing his enbyfriend’s hand and following Hop out of the room.

Silence hangs in the air. Robin delicately applies eyeliner around their eyes.

“What now then?” Richie asked, he walks over and sits on the bed behind Robin.

“How are we supposed to go to the bonfire? We can’t even leave the dorm.” Bill says plainly.

Robin shakes their head. “Ha! Bonfire.” They turn back and smirk with their eyeliner half drawn on. “We’ll sneak out the back.”

“That’s why they call it rule breaking, B-B-Bill!” Richie teased.

Bill scowls at the back of Richie’s head.

Robin shrugs and rolls their eyes at Bill whilst applying lip gloss. “Bill, turn off the lights.”

Then Bill Denbrough found himself creeping through the halls of ST Columbus by the torchlight on Robin’s phone, his new friend’s hand in one hand and his old friend who he’d needed so much and had miraculously come back to him in the other. Meeting Robin was great. It made him feel comfortable. But seeing Richie again, feeling his hand in his, that lit something off in Bill’s head and he felt like he was on some kinda sugar rush without even eating any sugar. A feeling he’d only been able to attach to celebrity heartthrobs and playground crushes. I mean he was 18 for crying out loud, this was silly. He was far above age old school crushes, especially for a lost friend he hadn’t seen in years. Maybe it was the beer, yeah, he told himself it was the beer.

But one thing he couldn’t deny was that everything was beginning to slot into place.

They climbed through a window at the back of the building and ran to the forest line. Mike came out from behind a tree and beckoned them over. As soon as they got behind cover Richie gasped and slung his arm around another much smaller boy who was hiding there. Sloppily he kissed him on the cheek.

“Hey, look who it is, Eds.” Richie whispered to him, encircling an arm around his hip and pulling him extra close.

The little boy nudged him and snapped “I told you to stop calling me that, you Bozo.”

As Bill stepped into Robin’s torchlight Eddie Kaspbrak almost squeaked. “Bill! Don’t tell me you’re here too?”

“Huh-Hi Eddie. Yeah, It’s crazy, right?”

Richie had now turned Eddie to the others. “Guys, this is my boyfriend, Eddie. He went to school back in Derry with me and Bill.” He announces smugly.

Shit. Bill clenched up.